

**California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley  
Merced County Public Forum  
Merced, CA – May 18, 2006**

**Member Testimony**

**Federal Representatives**

DeeDee A'damo from Congressman Dennis Cardoza's Office

- The problems of the San Joaquin Valley (Valley) are some of the worst in the nation
  - Highest poverty rate in California
  - Healthcare does not match the growth and immigration
  - The Valley does not receive adequate federal funds
- The answers to the problems are:
  - Governor's Executive Order
  - Support for Medical Center at UC Merced
  - A Valley water plan
  - A plan for Highway 99
  - A blueprint for the infrastructure and growth in the Valley

Congressman Jim Costa's representative

- Voiced support on behalf of Congressman Costa

**Government Panel**

Chairman Mike Nelson – Merced County Board of Supervisors

- Improve the quality of life in the Valley by using state and federal dollars to:
  - Improve Highway 99
  - Improve education at UC Merced and community colleges
  - Improve the healthcare system
  - Establish housing projects
- CEQA needs to be reevaluated because it adversely affects the ability to grow
- Future prosperity will require broadband, education and housing
- The leadership structure that would work best is a combination between state and local governments.

Lee Anderson – Superintendent Merced County Schools

- Focus on K-12 education development and reform
- Must include the State Superintendent to have proper reform
- The Partnership should consider pre-school programs for the Valley
- The Central Valley Education Coalition is a good example of how coalition building can improve education

John Garamendi, Jr. – Vice Chancellor for University Relations, UC Merced

- Support a Medical Center at UC Merced
- There needs to be a blue print for growth in the Valley
- Partnership should focus on the air pollution problem in the Valley
- The best leadership plan for the Partnership is the current structure

Frank Madero – Economic Development Merced County

- The Partnership plan should not be too big or out of reach – keep it simple to start
- Focus on fixing Highway 99 and the interchanges
- Support a Medical Center at UC Merced
- Develop a system to process waste water
- Invest in the business community in Merced

Mark Pazin – Sheriff Merced County

- Need to keep the focus on public safety

Steve Raff – City Manager Los Banos

- The growth of bay area commuters is straining the infrastructure in Los Banos
- There needs to be a plan for infrastructure
- Education programs should focus on K-12 education
- The leadership structure should include all of the counties and state agencies

Bob \_\_\_\_\_

- One major hurdle in planning for growth in the Valley is preserving agriculture
  - The Partnership should consider high density cities
  - Reevaluate CEQA and other environmental standards that pose a problem to growth

Transportation

- Waste water standards are out of date and they should be reevaluated
- The Partnerships plan for the Valley must have two components: state and local
  - Local needs should be addressed
  - The Valley must fit into an overall State plan
  - Find a consistent voice among the counties in the Valley

### **Business Panel**

Mark Hendrickson – Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce

- Three areas that will help improve the Valley:
  - Develop industry outside agriculture
  - Balance clean air acts with business
  - Assist with work force development

Scott Galbraith – Merced County Economic Development Corporation

- Assist small businesses in the Valley by creating a business incubator
- Improve the healthcare problems for the San Joaquin Valley
- Support a Medical Center at UC Merced

Louie Bandoni – Merced County Farm Bureau

- Agriculture is a big business and the main source of income for the Valley – don't let growth take over agriculture
- Reevaluate SB 50
- Top priorities for the Merced County Farm Bureau
  - Planned growth
  - Water storage
  - Preserving agriculture

Government Relations

- Economic development should supersede no growth
- Support SB 1800 – a housing bill authored by Senators Ducheny and Cedillo

### **Community Panel**

Bob McLaughlin – Mercy Hospital

- The Valley has a shortage of nurses and specialists
- Support a Medical Center at UC Merced

Paul Lao – Attorney

- Community would be better served if community centers are created to house senior citizens and youth activities

Diana Almanza – A Woman's Place of Merced County

- The biggest problems that affect the community are poverty, teen pregnancy and methamphetamines
- The state needs to provide more funding for drug programs
- The state should reimburse tuition for impoverished students